

ROSA COELI
ROSA MUNDI
ROSA INFERNI

BY

H. D. CARR
(ALEISTER CROWLEY)

WITH ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS BY
AUGUSTE RODIN

*Rosa Coeli and Rosa Mundi were first published in 1907
Rosa Inferni was first published in 1905*

*This 1976 Facsimile Edition is
Strictly limited to 500 copies
of which this is*

No. 5. 4.

ISBN 0 9505001 2 7

*Published by Neptune Press
49a Museum Street, London W.C.1.*

Printed in Great Britain by
The Garden City Press Limited
Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1JS

177 50-50 2000

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A POEM

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ROSA COELI

ROSE of the World!
Ruby with blood from the bright veins of God
Caught in the chalice of your heart, and pearled
With dew at many a melting period
When the amethyst lustre of your eyes dissolves
The veil that hides your naked splendour
From these infirm resolves
And halting loves of your poor poet's soul
With radiance mild and tender,
So that I see awhile the golden goal!
Yea! all your light involves
Me, me tenebrous, me too cold and base
Ever to kindle to the maiden face
(Three years my wife, three years of me unwon!)
That would be mine, be mine,
Were I but man enough
To endure the rapture of that sudden sun
The knowledge of your love,
The assumption of me into that sweet shrine

Whose godhead duly knows
Only the one wind of the utmost heaven
Through hyacinthine deeps
Down from the sapphirine steeps
And azure abyss that blows;
Only the one sun on the steppéd snows;
Only the one star of the sister seven;
Only the one moon in the orchard close
In the one hour that unto love is given
Of all the hours of bliss;
Only the one joy in a world of woes;
Only the one spark in the storm-cloud riven;
Only the one shaft through the rose-dawn driven,
Thy shaft, Eros!
Not as Apollo or as Artemis
Loosing gray death from golden thong
To slay the poet in a song,
The lover in a kiss;
But to divide the inmost marrow
With that ensanguine arrow;
But to unite each bleeding part
Of that most universal heart;
Leaving us slaves, and kings;
Bound, and with eagle's wings;
One soul, comprising all that may be thought,
One soul, conscious of nought.

II

ROSE of the World! Your mystic petals spread
Like wings over my head.
The tide of burning blood upon my face
Drowns all the floating images
That danced their spectre saraband
In Bacchic race, phantastical embrace,
Upon the sepulchres, the dizzy seas
Of this my mind, Sabbatic rout that spanned
These straits my soul! Ay, they are dead and drowned
(And damned, I doubt!) Ah God! I am exhaust
In the red moon's holocaust!
God! God! The chasms secret and profound
Suck down the porphyry flood
Of your maniacal, ensorcelled blood
That maddens and bewitches.
My life is suffocated—now I swoon—
I die! I am in hell, red hell, red hell,
And all the immortal in me itches
To grip the immortal; now the spell
Circles me closer; all the soul's afire
As if the Boreal moon
With all the icy Lapland hags
That shiver on's hibernal crags
Were but a thin white shell
Hoarding the seed of many a million suns,
Giving its life up unto its desire—
Out bursts the womb of my unguessed-at godhead;

The rose flames out in the flood; and all at once,
A brilliance disembodied,
I am shattered like the dew upon your leaves;
So that the lampless hour
Strikes, and an unborn universe perceives
Its lonely mother-flower,
Us, in our love's arcane Briatic bower.
We scatter light, a music-tingling shower;
We breathe out life, a crimson whisper;
We radiate love, a velvet-soft complaint,
Most like the echo of a chime at vesper
Rung far across narcissus-haunted leas,
Lilied lagoons, and moon-enchanted seas,
By the high-bosomed boy, large-eyed, with fasting faint,
That shares an hermitage with some devoutest saint.

III

AS, in our life, I passed the awful gate
Where like a Cerberus sate
The triform silence, Fate,
And bade the red blood bloom
Within that Palace of untasted gloom;
As, in our life, confronting the black forms—
Colossal ghosts, like storms!—
I did abide in the most holy hall
And let the dread word fall,
Nor bade the red axe falter

There as I bowed mine head
Upon the amber altar,
And shed my life out there before ye all,
Careless if I had summoned from the skies
Some young true God, or spoiled the sacrifice,
And were but dead as any man is dead!
So I have given up my inmost life
Even unto you, sweet wife,
Careless—yet conscious of the babe-stirred womb
Of some dread Mother older than the Tomb,
Wiser than Life, more pitiful than Death.

IV

YOUR wine-stained and wine-coloured hair unloosing,
Mingle your wine-wise breath,
Spiritual siren! with the scent seducing
Your body sheds, scarred with the bleeding kisses
My tenderness bit in,
Like to a lion feeding in wild white wildernesses,
My spirit sensible to your skin:
Mingle them to a crescent character
That shall set shimmering all the parchment fine
And send a steam like wine
Laden with ecstasy and pain
Choral through all the passion-stained and passion-
trembling air.
Inspire a closer strain

Such as strange orchids give and hyacinths
Among the broken pedestals and plinths
Where the gray Lords of Time, of Time forgotten,
Lie in the herbage rotten
Of the unpeopled forest.

V

O SONG! O amorous and seducing,
I see thee as thou soarest,
So that, the girders of the soul unloosing,
That Child of you and me, O rose of roses,
That Child whose life encloses
Our lives, is therefore I, may wander ever
By the fritillary-fringed river,
Through lotus gardens of the sleepy gods,
On hills where every timid oread tries
Blue gentian as disguise
From holier (though she think profaner) eyes,
On seas where, it may be, (to even the odds!)
Each nymph and undine issues from the foam
Armed with a pearly mirror and with a coral comb
To tire her beauty, lure me to the lakes
Of light where strikes the day to hyaline floors
Whereon blithe fish and emerald water snakes
Play all the day, and all their innocence adores
Is some old anchor with its rusty flakes
Fallen from God knows what forgotten ship.

No! not in Fancy's palace will I play,
Nor in imagination's deep will dip
The timid foot; but rather will I strip
Each rag of thought, and leap
Into the sunset deep
Still glowing with the glamour
Of your life's blood, and ashen gold
With floating gossamer your hair, that might enfold
A giant god, and strangle him anon
With starry serpents like Laocoon,
A stoic god that might enamour
And draw him with its tendrils into time.

VII

MY mouth was wet with the delicious crime
Of kissing you, one night, when in a vision
Your hair was like a forest of tall pines
In winter; black strange dwarfs with crooked spines
And elfin eyes, and bleating mouths that worked
All manner of grimace and bleak derision
Bore them away; hollow-eyed ghosts that lurked
About the sea made thereof masts; they fitted
Tall ships and goodly, furrowing the deep
To harvest merchandise; strong and keen-witted
The mariners; oh! the breezes leap
Like lovers on them; lo! they faréd forth

To South, East, West and North,
Iceland, the Indies, Sicily, and Spain.
Lo! men have heard of all these ships not one, not one
for ever more again.

VIII

SEEING your naked body in the bed
Against the jetty silk, I thought you lay
Just as the Milky Way
Lies in the unkenned hollows of the sky.
One swarthy ray of red
Leapt from your hither eye,
And straight my dream began
To map that heaven—your eye, Aldeboran!
I launched the magic boat, and early found
The Pirate's cave and the Enchaunted Ground;
The cedared Lebanon,
The Wizard's Grot, the well of spice,
The Hanging Gardens of great Babylon:—
All these then did I visit in a trice,
And even did confirm the Bible tale
By playing Jonah to your Jonah's whale.
So, to the stars!

IX

A POET is at ease
In all such voyages:
Why, as a boy, I steered
Up to the Scorpion and tweaked his tail,
Plucked foolish Capricornus by the beard
And kissed the Blessed Damozel that leaned upon the
 golden rail,
Drank from the glad rim of the grail
Or soothed the squally Twins (for they would weep!)
And while I smiled "In Heaven how safe I am!"
Found myself in my little bed asleep,
Having been butted thither by the Ram.

X

BUT in the dream of you, my starry sweet,
It is my earth I lose six times in seven.
I have the Freedom of the City of Heaven;
But strange (though fair) are all the stars I meet.
The dull familiar and the homely drear
Are lost for ever. Being asleep, I fear.
Wake! Let me cut the cable of my mind!
My harbour lies before, and not behind.
Dreams are all lies; those jetty shadows lie
When the full moon doth crown the midnight sky.
But shadows image truth, and dreams come true,
For when I wake my arms are full of you.

XI

ANOTHER time, through tides from chaos rolled
I was upborne by this my scarabee
With scales like plates of porphyry and gold
And wings like flakes of the green light that pours
Through the blue heart of the Hawaian sea.
So to the hollow shores
We came, and did behold a silver avenue
That wound through cypress groves and woods of yew
Unto the hills; hideous hyaenas laughed,
Mean jackals snarled and screamed, and wild dogs bayed:
Bayed at the waning moon that lapsed above
Out of all light (had I not been in love
And drunken on the quintessential draught)
So that the forest folk were sore afraid.
But when I came upon the open space
I might perceive my lady's face
And knew she waned because that I was late.
Twin hills like ivory glinted; on their slopes
Blue rivers coursed, and many a nightingale
Told all its tremulous tale
To viewless dryads, or elate
Trilled out its bleeding hopes
Into the mist of light that hid (I know)
Bassarids, Bassarids Dionysus-mad.
Then, in that vision glad,
I saw twin towers of crimson ruby rise
Into the scented snow

That fell like dew from the heart-hungry skies.
But when I came between the hills, behold
The moon's silver and gold
Stood in the zenith, that I lost my guide.
There stood I passion-pale
Like a lost lamb that seeks the starry fold
Within that warm and scented vale
Clothed with narcissus, hyacinth, tuberoses,
Snowdrop and lily, all white, all cream, all gold,
With never a blush like dawn's to flush or fail
Upon their garden-close.
O wide is the world, wide, wide!
Be sure that I was lost,
Lost, lost for ever; are there palimpsests
Wherein a man might study at great cost
His journey thence? O Rose of gramarye,
My riddle you shall ree.
My head was happy, laid betwixt your breasts.

XII

ANOTHER time I passed the holy well
And plunged (as Phoebus in the western ocean)
Into a forest of fine flame that crowned
The holy hill; all was enchanted ground,
The flames like scented tendrils of a vine
Or sensitive rays that spell
Strange curves to match their master-god's emotion.

And ever nearer to the scarlet slash
I clomb, where the strange perfumes struck me like
 a lash,
And the dread fires scorched up my life.
There, O insufferable delight
I mock with the weak word of wife,
I was sucked down into the crater rim,
Into the crimson damask dim
Candescent cave of night—
O then I mock myself with words!
They are like cardinal-coloured birds
And honey-coloured doves;
Yet one thing mortal serves to name another
As mortal as itself.
Why must our deathless loves
Be stained by the black-hearted mother
That called things by dead names?
The sunny elf
Language shall play with the ethereal flames
But never dare approach
The central and volcanic fire,
The inmost Force, nor, like a glittering army
Send forth its scouts to encroach
Upon our citadel desire.
Ay! though these flaming sentences
Eat like strong acid in my vitals, char me,
Blast me like lightning, smash me like black seas
Towering above the lofty ship
Whose masts did menace to the skies,

They are but plaisters of cool leaves that dip
In pleasant water to the white-hot wise.
Terrible flames of hell that would devour me,
Did not the raptures of thy love embower me
In meads Elysian, fields of foamless fire,
Nights of invincible desire,
Things beyond words, beyond the want of them,
Beyond the pauses and the ecstasies
Where should my dream get such a diadem
Of voiceless thoughts as these?

XIII

THESE dreams reform
Themselves into a rainbow to the storm
Of simple passion; let me from the string
Take many-coloured wing
As a swift-thoughted arrow
Vertically shot against the sun!
I would you were a sow
And these my verses were your squealing farrow
So they might suck the milk of your perfection
Unto them, that the world's ear might be won,
The world's heart melted now,
The world's mind drawn from its dejection,
By the sure fact that not in idle dream
But sole in sense supreme
Certainly visible and tangible

Were you, O Rose, whose root remotest hell
Nourishes, and whose top flowers higher than the Throne
Of the Eternal one.
Thou shouldst not leave me alone
To gaze upon the sun
And take the glory of his excellence—
Not unto me close curled
And on my body's beauty crucified
In silver spirit clad with gold of sense,
But sending forth thy rays life-pearled
As a bridegroom squandering his strength upon the bride
—Thou art sufficient to redeem the world.

XIV

O ! IS the secret of the starry deep
Nothing but pain and pleasure, grief and joy?
Is God a wanton boy
To play with us so bitter cheap
By such a jewelled light? Be thine the power,
Rose of the Stars, in this thy tortured hour
When the wee lips that clung to thee are cold,
To give the world a light of other gold
From that men hoard, from that the suns afford
In their implacable cars
As they roll on impassive; bid thy Lord
(O Rose, Rose of the Stars!)
And slave make known thy beauty and thy passion

In his imperfect fashion,
So that thy wisdom and thy strength are sold
In every mart of earth;
So that thine eyes enfold
The universe in one great look of love.
Bring this, bring this to birth!
And neither hate below, nor hate above,
Nor chance, nor force, nor cunning shall deprive
Man of thy gift, a love alive
With more than men to-day can understand.

XV

GIVE me thine hand,
Rose of the Stars, and we will soar above
Wisdom and Strength and Love,
Into the sphere where all delight retires
In azure flames and silver-edgéd fires.
Now through the veil we shoot
Like snaky lightning through a thundercloud
Up to the awful precipice-skirted place
Where deaf, blind, palsied, mute
There sits the leprous God; we laugh aloud
Seeing him face to face,
Blowing him like a shaken sheaf of snow
With a brief gust of wind
Over the cliffs of his ensanguine throne;
Seating ourselves thereon, as men shall know,

Above soul, spirit, heart, thought, being, mind,
All—but most irrevocably entwined
And irrevocably alone.

XVI

THERE was a boy with O! the face of dawn,
The mother-of-pearl that shimmered on his skin,
The breasts like golden roses circling red,
The limbs like limbs of a young fawn
For litheness—O! for innocence of sin
His eyes burned wondrous bright, his sun-crowned head
Danced with its sweet and sacred hopes,
So that he paced the enamelled slopes
Laughing upon the laughing lake below,
Expectant of some strange experience
Worth all the woes of sense,
Some drop of nectar worth a world of wine,
Some grace of One divine
Worth more than all life's grace, and more than life
intense,
Was there a wonder if the silken boy
Found her a-playing on the bluebell marge
And drank from golden vats the wine of joy;
Hot, eager, overcoming in her breath,
As she would draw him to those large
And firm white breasts and mix her liquid life
With his in pagan strife?

Or with a grace like God, a stealth like love,
Pour on him from above
Wine from the purple vats of death?
Nay! 'tis no wonder—shall they wonder then,
These bat-eyed newspaper-besotted men,
If thou and I have found the Elixir rare
That giveth Life to whoso drinketh it,
The Stone beyond compare,
The harmony of the Circle and the Square,
All that surpasseth mortal wit
Even to imagine? we have found it, Rose,
Rose of the Stars, Rose of the utmost snows!
Where? Where Love knows.

ROSA INFERNI

A POEM

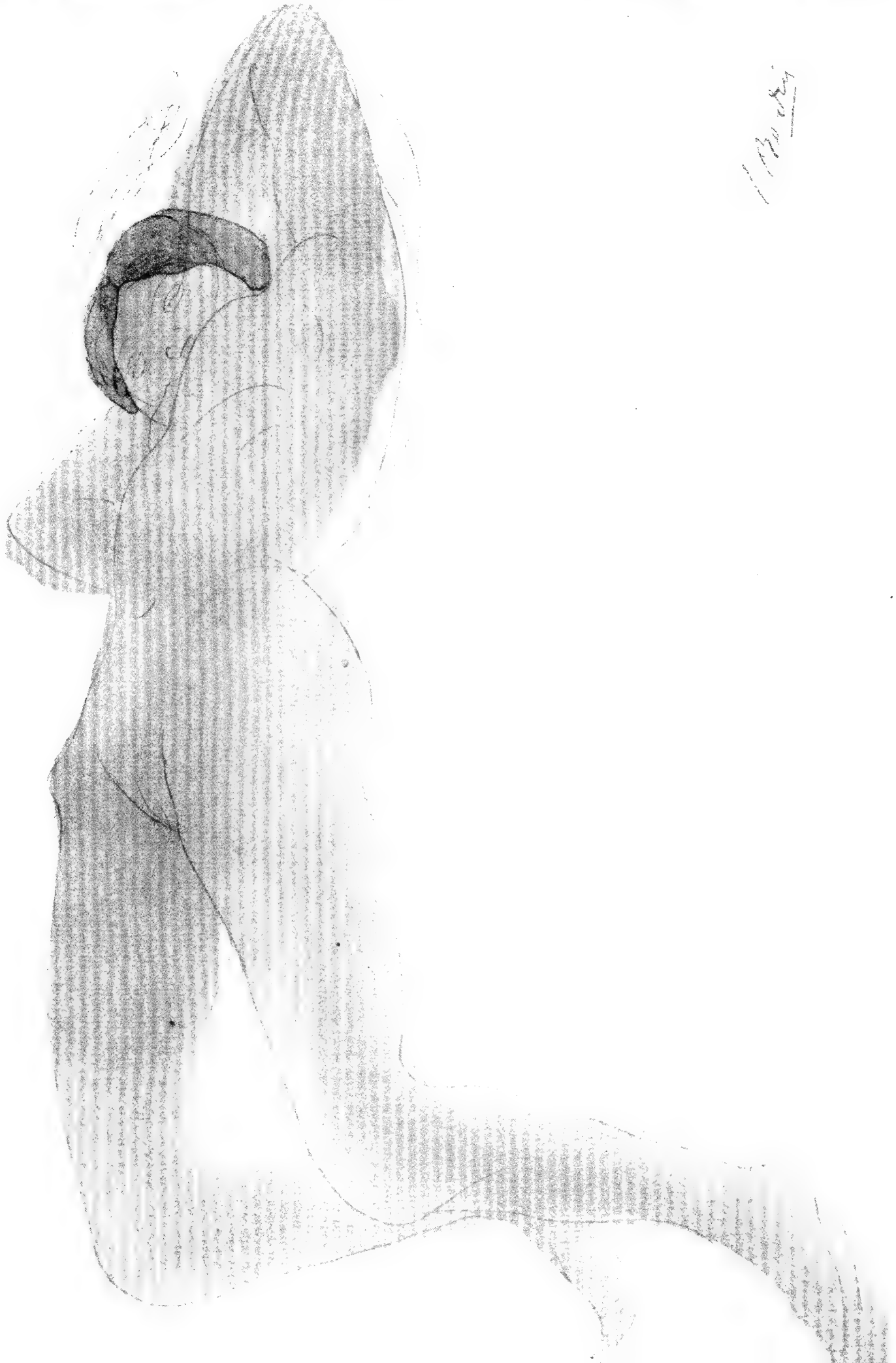
BY

H. D. CARR

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AUGUSTE RODIN

1/17/84



ROSA INFERNI

Ha ha! John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart.
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays uncloze;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell.
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of hell!
BROWNING, *Heretic's Tragedy*, ix.

I

ROSE of the world! Ay, love, in that warm hour
Wet with your kisses, the bewitching bud
Flamed in the starlight; then our bed your bower
Heaved like the breast of some alluring flood
Whereon a man might sleep for ever, until
Death should surprise him, kiss his weary will
Into the last repose, profounder power
Than life could compass. Now I tax my skill
To find another holier name, some flower
Still red, but red with the ecstasy of blood.
Dear love, dear wife, dear mother of the child
Whose fair faint features are a match for mine,
Lurks there no secret where your body smiled,

Head downward, gorged with sweet banana juice,
Indifferent to—incapable of—aught
Beyond these simple reflexes. Is thought,
Even the highest thought, of any use?

IV

WE are not discussing metaphysics now.
I see below the beautiful low brow
(Low too for cunning, like enough!) your lips,
A scarlet splash of murder. From them drips
This heart's blood; you have fed your fill on me.
I am exhaust, a pale, wan phantom floating
Aimless in air, than which I am thinner. You
I see, more brilliant, of that sanguine hue
(If anything be true that I can see)
Full fed; you smile, a smile obscenely gloating
On the voluptuous wreck your lust hath wrought.
See the loose languor of precipitate thought
These versicles exhale! How rude the rime!
There is no melody; the tune and time
Are broken. Thirteen centuries ago
They would have said, "Alas! the youth! We know
This devil hath from him plucked the immortal soul."
I say: you have dulled my centres of control!

V

IF you were with me, I were blind to this:
 Ready to drain my arteries for your kiss,
 Feel your grasp tighten round my ribs until
 You crush me in the ecstasies that kill.
 Being away and breathing icy air
 I am half-lover, caring not to care;
 Half-man again—a mere terrestrial ball
 Thus breaking up a spiritual thrall—
 Eh, my philosophers?—half-man may yet determine
 To get back manhood, shake the tree from bats:
 To change the trope a shade—get rid of vermin
 By using William Shakespeare's "Rough on Rats."

VI

AH, love, dear love, sole queen of my affection,
 Guess you not yet what wheel of thought is spun?
 How out of dawn's tumultuous dejection
 And not from noon springs up the splendid sun?
 Not till the house is swept and garnished well
 Rise seven other devils out of hell.

VII

THIS is the circle; as the manhood rises
And laughter and rude rime engage my pen;
As I stalk forth, a Man among mere men,
The balance changes; all my wit surprises
That I who saw the goblins in your face,
That I who cursed you for the murderous whore
Licking up life as a cat laps its milk,
Now see you for a dream of youth and grace,
Relume the magic aura that begirt you,
Bless you for purity and life—a store!
An ever-running fountain-head of virtue
To heal my soul and buckler it and harden!
Your body is like ivory and silk!
Your lips are like the poppies in the garden!
Your face is like a wreath of flowers to crown me!
Your eyes are wells wherein I long to drown me!
Your hair is like a waterfall above me,
A waterfall of sunset! In your bosom
I hear the racing of a heart to love me.
Your blood is beating like a wind-blown blossom
With rapture that you mingle it in mine!
Your breath is fresh as foam and keen as wine!
Intoxicating glories are your glances!
Your bodily beauty grips my soul and dances

Its maddening measures in my heart and brain!
Is it that so the wheel may whirl again,
That some dull devil in my ear may show me:
“For John the Baptist’s head—so danced Salome!”?

VIII

THEN, in God’s name forbear! It does not matter.
Life, death, strength, weakness, are but idle chatter.
Nothing is lost or gained, we know too well.
For heaven they balance us an equal hell.
We discard both; an infinite Universe
Remains; we sum it up—an infinite curse.
So—am I a man? I lack my wife’s embrace.
Am I outworn? I see the harlot’s face.
Is the love better and the knowledge worse?
Shall I seek knowledge and count love disgrace?
Where is the profit in so idle a strife?
The love of knowledge is the hate of life.

ROSA MUNDI

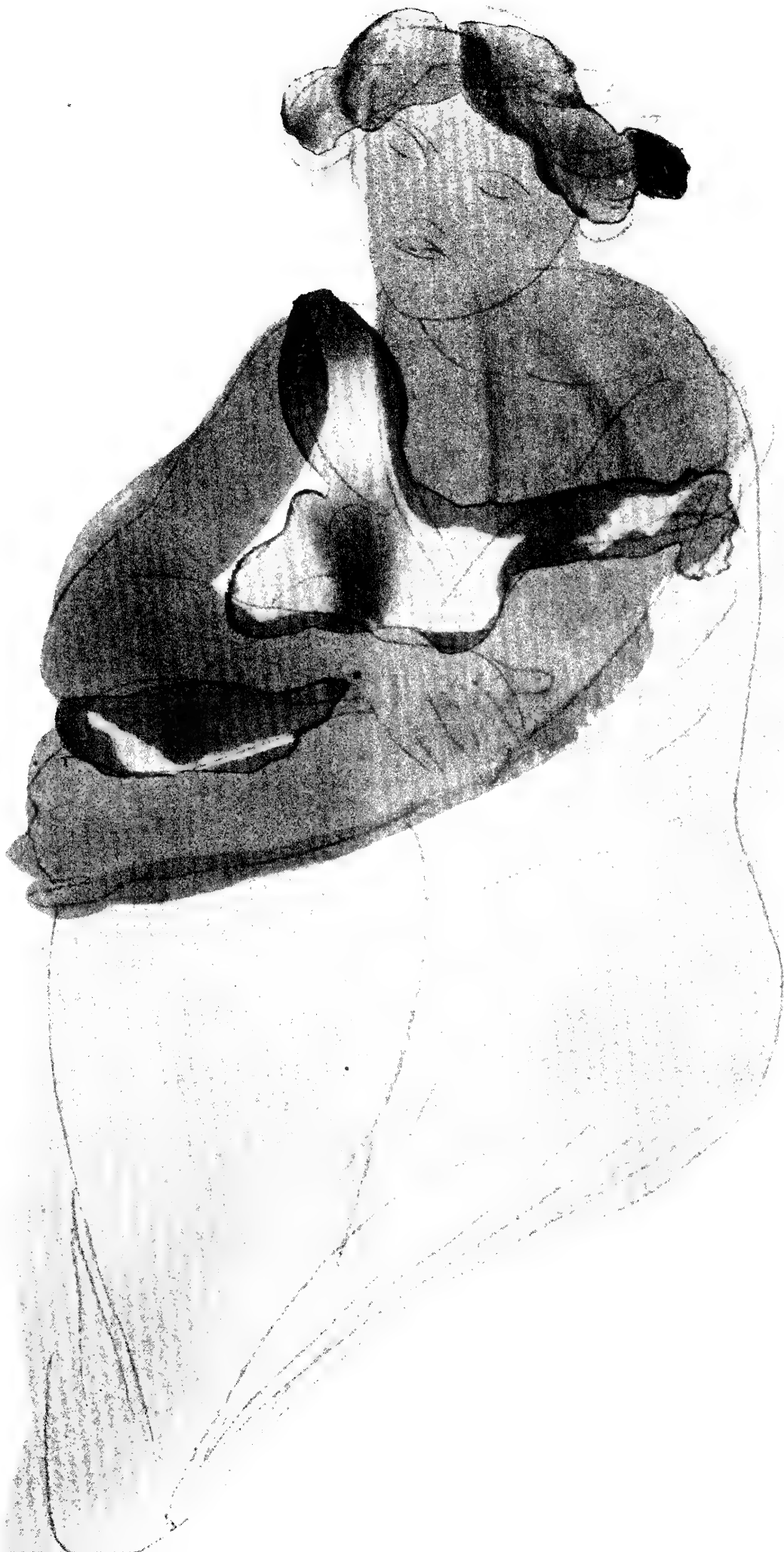
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1. Rose of the World!

Red glory of the secret heart of Love!
Red flame, rose-red, most subtly curled
Into its own infinite flower, all flowers above!
Its flower in its own perfumed passion,
Its faint sweet passion, folded and furled
In flower fashion;
And my deep spirit taking its pure part
In that voluptuous heart
Of hidden happiness!

2. Arise, strong bow of the young child Eros!

(While the maddening moonlight, the memoried caress
Stolen of the scented rose
Stirs me and bids each racing pulse ache, ache!)
Bend into an agony of art
Whose cry is ever rapture, and whose tears
For their own purity's undivided sake

Are molten dew, as, on the lotus leaves
Silver-coiled in the Sun
Into green-girdled spheres
Purer than all a maiden's dream enweaves,
Lies the unutterable Beauty of
The waters. Yea, arise, divinest dove
Of the Idalian, on your crimson wings
And soft grey plumes, bear me to yonder shrine
Of that most softly-spoken one,
Mine Aphrodite! Touch the imperfect strings,
Oh thou, immortal, throned above the moon!
Inspire a holy tune
Lighter and lovelier than flowers and wine
Offered in gracious gardens unto Pan
By any soul of man!

- 3 In vain the solemn stars pour their pale dews
Upon my trembling spirit; their caress
Leaves me moon-rapt in waves of loveliness
All thine, O rose, O wrought of many a muse
In Music, O thou strength of ecstasy
Incarnate in a woman-form, create
Of her own rapture, infinite, ultimate,
Not to be seen, not grasped, not even imaginable,
But known of one, by virtue of that spell
Of thy sweet will toward him : thou, unknown,
Untouched, grave mistress of the sunlight throne
Of thine own nature; known not even of me,

But of some spark of woven eternity
Immortal in this bosom. Phosphor paled
And in the grey upstarted the dread veiled
Rose light of dawn. Sunshapen shone thy spears
Of love forth darting into myriad spheres,
Which I the poet called this light, that flower,
This knowledge, that illumination, power
This and love that, in vain, in vain, until
Thy beauty dawned, all beauty to distil
Into one drop of utmost dew, one name
Choral as floral, one thin, subtle flame
Fitted to a shaft of love. O bear me far
Up and up yet to where thy sacred star
Burns in its brilliance! Thence the storm be shed
A passion of great calm about this head,
This head no more a poet's. Ay! the dream
Of beauty clustered close into a stream
Of tingling light, and, gathering ever force
From thine own love, its unextended source,
Became the magic utterance that makes Me,
Dissolving self into the starless sea
That makes one lake of molten joy, one pond
Steady as light and hard as diamond;
One drop, one atom of constraint intense,
Of elemental passion scorning sense,
All the centred music that is I.
O! hear me not! I die;
I am borne away in misery of dumb life

That would in words flash forth the holiest heaven
That to the immortal God of Gods is given,
And, tongue-tied, stammers forth — my wife!

- 4 I am dumb with rapture of thy loveliness.
All metres match and mingle; all words tire;
All lights, all sounds, all perfumes, all gold stress
Of the honey-palate, all soft strokes expire
In abject agony of broken sense
To hymn the emotion tense
Of somewhat higher — O! how highest! — than all
Their mystery : fall, O fall,
Ye unavailing eagle-flights of song!
O wife! these do thee wrong.

- 5 Thou knowest how I was blind;
How for mere minutes thy pure presence
Was nought; was ill-defined;
A smudge across the mind,
Drivelling in its brutal essence,
Hog-wallowing in poetry,
Incapable of thee.

- 6 Ah! when the minutes grew to hours,
And yet the beast, the fool, saw flowers
And loved them, watched the moon rise, took delight
In perfumes of the summer night,

Caught in the glamour of the sun
Thought all the woe well won.
How hours were days, and all the misery
Abode, all mine : O thou! didst thou regret?
Wast thou asleep as I?
Didst thou not love me yet?
For, know! the moon is not the moon until
She hath the knowledge to fulfil
Her music, till she know herself the moon.
So thou, so I! The stone unhewn,
Foursquare, the sphere, of human hands immune,
Was not yet chosen for the corner-piece
And key-stone of the Royal Arch of Sex;
Unsolved the ultimate x;
The virginal breeding breeze
Was yet of either unstirred;
Unspoken the Great Word.

- 7 Then on a sudden, we knew. From deep to deep
Reverberating, lightning unto lightning
Across the sundering brightening
Abyss of sorrow's sleep,
There shone the sword of love and struck, and clove
The intolerable veil,
The woven chain of mail
Prudence self-called, and folly known to who
May know. Then, O sweet drop of dew,
Thy limpid light rolled over and was lost

In mine, and mine in thine.
Peace, ye who praise! ye but disturb the shrine!
This voice is evil over against the peace
Here in the West, the holiest. Shaken and crossed
The threads Lachesis wove fell from her hands.
The pale divided strands
Were taken by thy master-hand, Eros!
Her evil thinkings cease,
Thy miracles begin.
Eros! Eros! — Be silent! It is sin
Thus to invoke the oracles of order
Their iron gates to uncloset.
The gross, inhospitable warder
Of Love's green garden of spice is well awake.
Hell hath enough of Her three-headed hound;
But Love's severer bound
Knows for His watcher a more fearful shape,
A formidable ape
Skilled by black art to mock the Gods profound
In their abyss of under ground.
Beware! Who hath entered hath no boast to make,
And conscious Eden surelier breeds the snake.
Be silent! O! for silence' sake!

- 8 That asks the impossible. Smite! Smite!
Profaned adytum of pure light,
Smite! but I must sing on.
Nay! can the orison

Of myriad fools provoke the Crowned-with-Night
Hidden beyond sound and sight
In the mystery of His own high essence?
Lo, Rose of all the gardens of the world,
Did thy most sacred presence
Not fill the Real, then this voice were whirled
Away in the wind of its own folly, thrown
Into forgotten places and unknown.
So I sing on!

Sister and wife, dear wife,
Light of my love and lady of my life,
Answer if thou canst from the unsullied place,
Unveiling for one star-wink thy bright face!
Did we leave then, once cognisant,
Time for some Fear to implant
His poison? Did we hesitate?
Leave but one little chance to Fate?
For one swift second did we wait?
There is no need to answer : God is God,
A jealous God and evil ; with His rod
He smiteth fair and foul, and with His sword
Divideth tiniest atoms of intangible time,
That men may know he is the Lord.
Then, with that sharp division,
Did He divide our wit sublime?
Our knowledge bring to nought?
We had no need of thought.
We brought His malice in derision.

So thine eternal petals shall enclose
Me, O most wonderful lady of delight,
Immaculate, indivisible circle of night,
Inviolata, invulnerable Rose!

- 9 The sound of my own voice carries me on.
I am as a ship whose anchors are all gone,
Whose rudder is held by Love the indomitable —
Purposeful helmsman! Were his port high Hell,
Who should be fool enough to care? Suppose
Hell's waters wash the memory of this rose
Out of my mind, what misery matters then?
Or, if they leave it, all the woes of men
Are as pale shadows in the glory of
That passionate splendour of Love.
Ay! my own voice, my own thoughts: These, then, must be
The mutiny of some worm's misery,
Some chained despair knotted into my flesh,
Some chance companion, some soul damned afresh
Since my redemption, that is vocal at all;
For I am wrapt away from light and call
In the sweet heart of the red rose.
My spirit only knows
This woman and no more; who would know more?
I, I am concentrate
In the unshakeable state
Of constant rapture. Who should pour
His ravings in the air for winds to whirl,

Far from the central pearl
Of all the diadem of the universe?
Let God take pen, rehearse
Dull nursery tales; then, not before, O rose,
Red rose! shall the belov'd of thee,
Infinite rose! pen puerile poetry
That turns in writing to vile prose.

- 10 Were this the quintessential plume of Keats
And Shelley and Swinburne and Verlaine,
Could I outsoar them, all their lyric feats,
Excel their utterance vain
With one convincing rapture, beat them hollow
As an ass's skin; wert thou, Apollo,
Mere slave to me, not Lord — thy fieriest flight
And stateliest shaft of light
Thyself thyself surpassing; all were dull,
And thou, O rose, sole, sacred, wonderful,
Informing all, in all most beautiful,
Circle and sphere, perfect in every part,
High above hope of Art :
Though, be it said! thou art nowhere now,
Save in the secret chamber of my heart,
Behind the brass of my anonymous brow.

- 11 Ay! let the coward and slave who writes write on!
He is no more harm to Love than the grey snake
Who lurks in the dusk brake

For the bare-legged village boy, is to the Sun,
The Sire of Life.
The Lover and the Wife,
Sun-canopied, ignore. The people hear;
Then, be the people smitten of grey Fear,
It is no odds!

12 I have seen the eternal Gods
Sit, star-wed, in old Egypt by the Nile;
The same calm pose, the inscrutable, wan smile,
On every lip alike.
Time hath not had his will to strike
At them; they abide, they pass through all.
Though their most ancient names may fall,
They stir not nor are weary of
Life, for with them, even as with us, Life is but Love.
They know, we know; let, then, the writing go!
That, in the very truth, we do not know.

13 It may be in the centuries of our life
Since we were man and wife
There stirs some incarnation of that love.
Some rosebud in the garden of beauty blows,
Some offshoot from the Rose
Of the World, the Rose of all Delight,
The Rose of Dew, the Rose of Love and Night,
The Rose of Silence, covering as with a vesture
The solemn unity of things

Beheld in the mirror of truth,
The Rose indifferent to God's gesture,
The Rose on moonlight wings
That flies to the House of Fire,
The Rose of Honey-in-Youth!
Ah! No dim mystery of desire
Fathoms this gulph! No light invades
The mystical musical shades
Of a faith in the future, a dream of the day
When athwart the dim glades
Of the forest a ray
Of sunlight shall flash and the dew die away!

- ¹⁴ Let there then be obscurity in this!
There is an after rapture in the kiss.
The fire, flesh, perfume, music, that outpaced
All time, fly off; they are subtle : there abides
A secret and most maiden taste;
Salt, as of the invisible tides
Of the molten sea of gold
Men may at times behold
In the rayless scarab of the sinking sun;
And out of that is won
Hardly, with labour and pain that are as pleasure,
The first flower of the garden, the stored treasure
That lies at the heart's heart of eternity.
This treasure is for thee.

15 O! but shall hope arise in happiness?
That may not be.
My love is like a golden grape; the veins
Peep through the ecstasy
Of the essence of ivory and silk,
Pearl, moonlight, mother-milk
That is her skin;
Its swift caress
Flits like an angel's kiss in a dream; remains
The healing virtue; from all sin,
All ill, one touch sets free.
My love is like a star — oh fool! oh fool!
Is not thy back yet tender from the rod?
Is there no learning in the poet's school?
Wilt thou achieve what were too hard for God?
I call Him to the battle; ask of me
When the hinds calve? What of eternity
When he built chaos? Shall Leviathan
Be drawn out with an hook? Enough; I see
This I can answer — or Ernst Haeckel can!
Now, God Almighty, rede this mystery!
What of the love that is the heart of man?
Take stars and airs, and write it down!
Fill all the interstices of space
With myriad verse — own Thy disgrace!
Diminish Thy renown!
Approve my riddle! This Thou canst not do.

16 O living Rose! O dowered with subtle dew
Of love. The tiny eternities of time,
Caught between flying seconds, are well filled
With these futilities of fragrant rhyme;
In Love's retort distilled,
In sunrays of fierce loathing purified,
In moonrays of pure longing tried,
And gathered after many moons of labour
Into the compass of a single day :
So, wrought into continuous tune,
One laughter with one languor for its neighbour,
One thought of winter with one word of June,
Muddled and mixed in mere dismay,
Chiselled with the cunning chisel of despair,
Found wanting, well aware
Of its own fault, even insistent
Thereon; some fragrance rare
Stolen from my lady's hair
Perchance redeeming now and then the distant
Fugitive tunes; — Ah! Love! the hour is over!
The moon is up, the vigil overpast.

17 Call me to thee at last,
O Rose, O perfect miracle lover,
Call me! I hear thee, though it be across
The abyss of the whole universe,
Though not a sigh escape, delicious loss!
Though hardly a wish rehearse

The imperfection underlying ever
The perfect happiness.
Thou knowest that not in flesh
Lies the fair fresh
Delight of Love; not in mere lips and eyes
The secret of these bridal ecstasies,
Since thou art everywhere,
Rose of the World, Rose of the Uttermost
Abode of Glory, Rose of the High Host
Of Heaven, mystic, rapturous Rose!
The extreme passion glows
Deep in this breast; thou knowest (and love knows)
How every word awakes its own reward
In a thought akin to thee, a shadow of thee;
And every tune evokes its musical Lord;
And every rhyme tingles and shakes in me
The filaments of the great web of Love.

- 18 O Rose all roses far above
In the garden of God's roses,
Sorrowless, thornless, passionate Rose, that lies
Full in the flood of its own sympathies
And makes my life one tune that curls and closes
On its own self delight;
A circle, never a line! Safe from all wind,
Secure in its own pleasure-house confined,
Sure lord of its own rapture, deaf and blind
To aught but its own mastery of song

And light, shewn ever as silence and deep night
Secret as death and final. Let me long
Never again for aught! This great delight
Involves me, weaves me in its pattern of bliss,
Seals me with its own kiss,
Draws me to thee with every dream that glows,
Poet, each word; maiden, each burden of snows
Extending beyond sunset, beyond dawn!
O Rose, inviolate, utterly withdrawn
In the truth : — for this is truth; Love knows!
Ah! Rose o the World! Rose! Rose!